SURAH OF AL-FIL

THE RESEARCH:
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AL-FIL

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THE REFERENCES

1) https://quran.com/al-fil/info

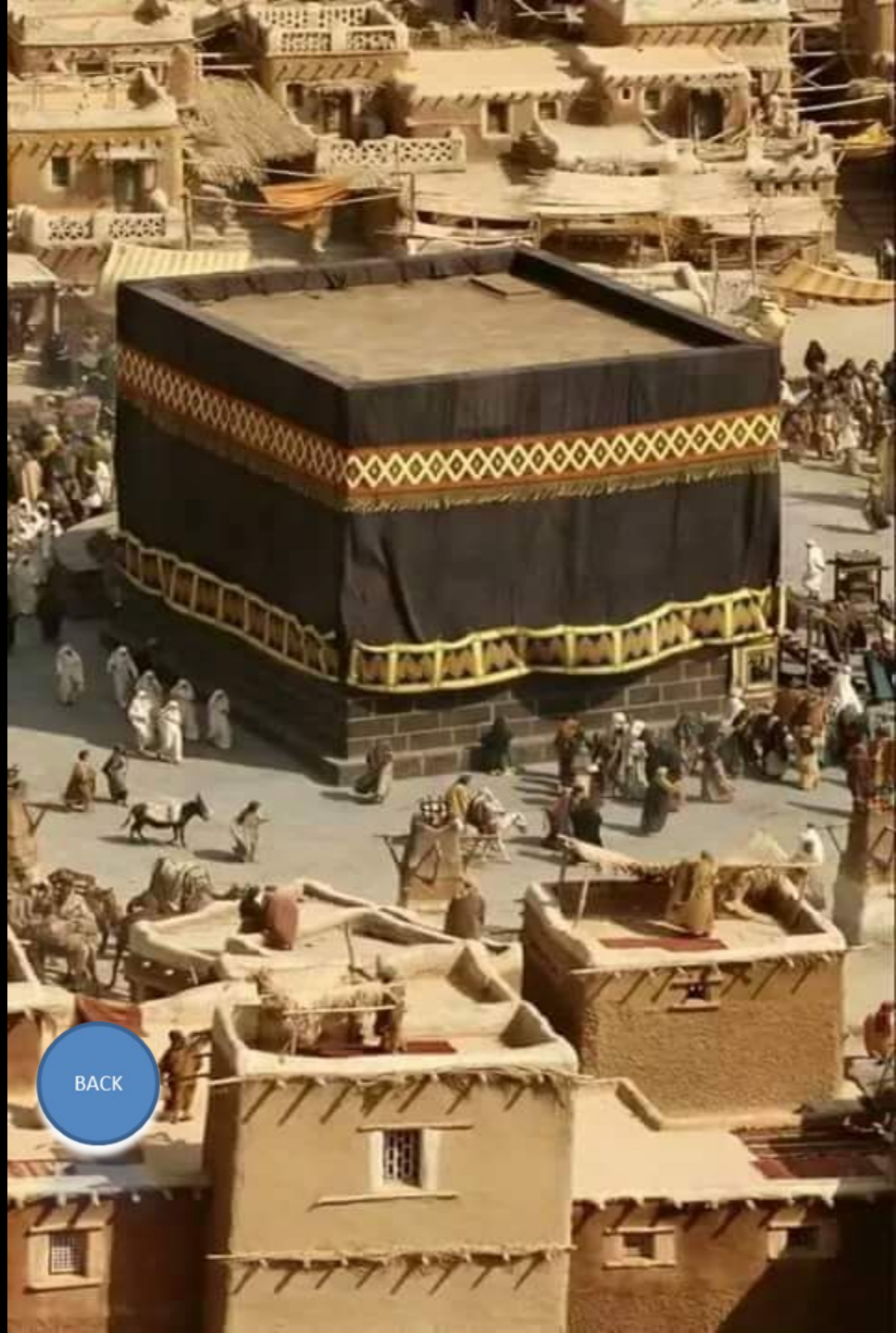
2) https://quran.com/al-fil

THE BACKGROUND 1

Adapted from Tafsir Ibn Ashur

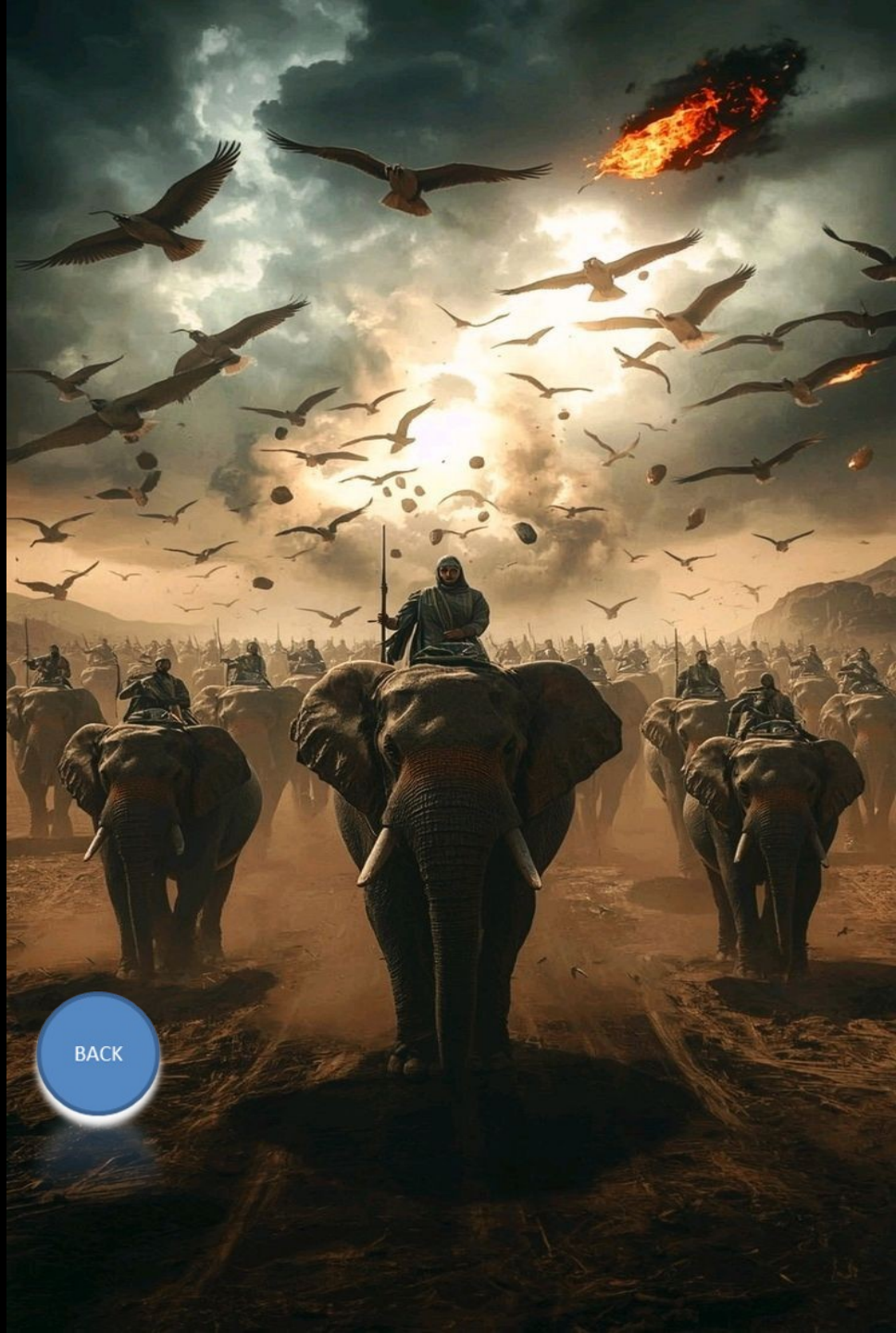
Themes and purpose:

This Meccan surah is dedicated to reminding the Quraysh of the miracle that occurred in the year of the Prophet’s birth: Allah sent birds to disperse an army with elephants who were brought to destroy the Kaʿbah. Its purpose is to affirm the sanctity of Makkah and the power of the One God, demonstrating that the same Lord who protected His House from the mighty army of Abrahah will certainly protect His Messenger from the plots of the polytheists.



Context of Revelation:

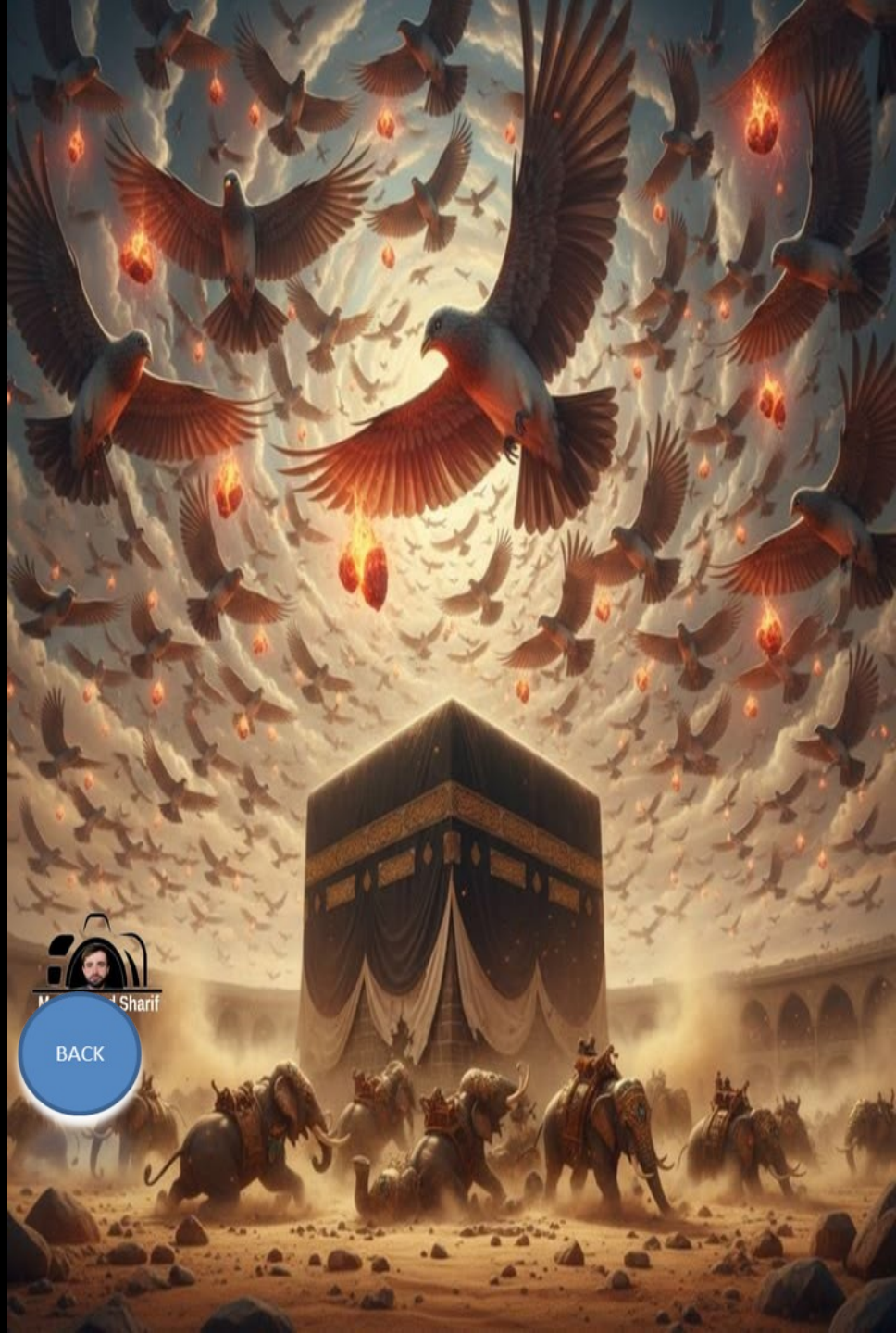
- Era: Makkan by consensus.
- Context: The surah was revealed early in the Prophet’s mission to remind the Quraysh of the divine anger shown toward Abrahah's army, which tried to destroy the Kaʿbah. This event, which occurred in their lifetime, was vivid proof against their polytheism.
- Chronology: It is counted as the 19th surah in the order of revelation, revealed after Sūrat al-Kāfirūn and before Sūrat al-Falaq. (A minority view places it before Sūrat Quraysh).



Name and relation to the next surah

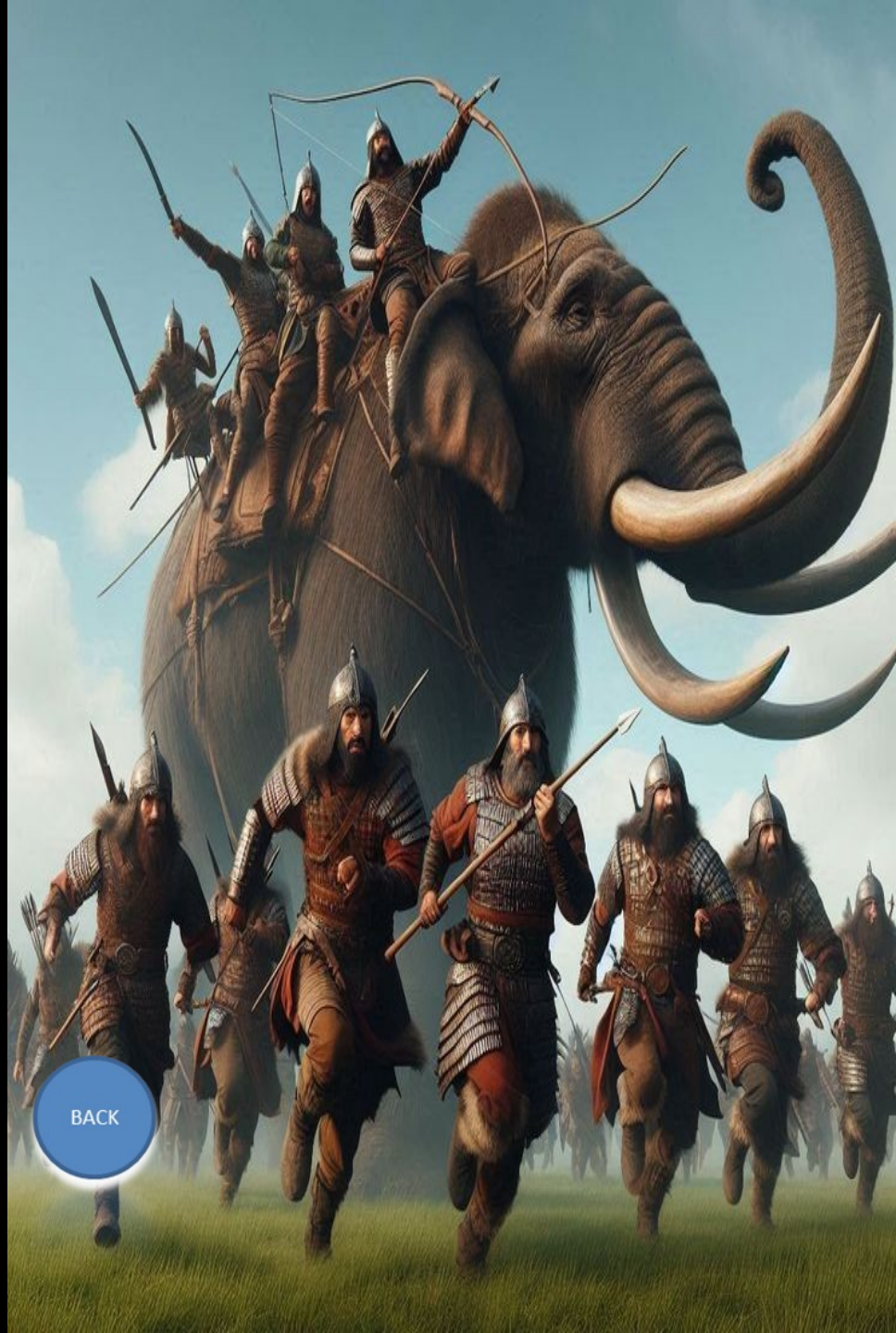
- Name: The surah is known as "Sūrat al-Fīl" (The Elephant), and sometimes as "Sūrat A-lam Tara" (Did You Not See), for the opening ayah.

- Relation to the next surah: Ubayy ibn Kaʿb and ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb reportedly regarded this surah and Sūrat Quraysh as one unit due to their close thematic link, though the final consensus separated them in the written and recited Quran.



Surah Overview:

- Divine Power: Demonstrating that the one who protected the Kaʿbah from the army is the true Lord of the House, not the idols surrounding it. [1]
- Prophetic Consolation: Implicitly strengthening the Prophet (ﷺ) with the promise that Allah will drive away the plots of the polytheists, just as He drove away the plot of Abrahah. [2]
- Historical Lesson: Warning the Makkans that their force and numbers will not protect them from divine power. [3-5]



THE AYAT IN DETAILS 2

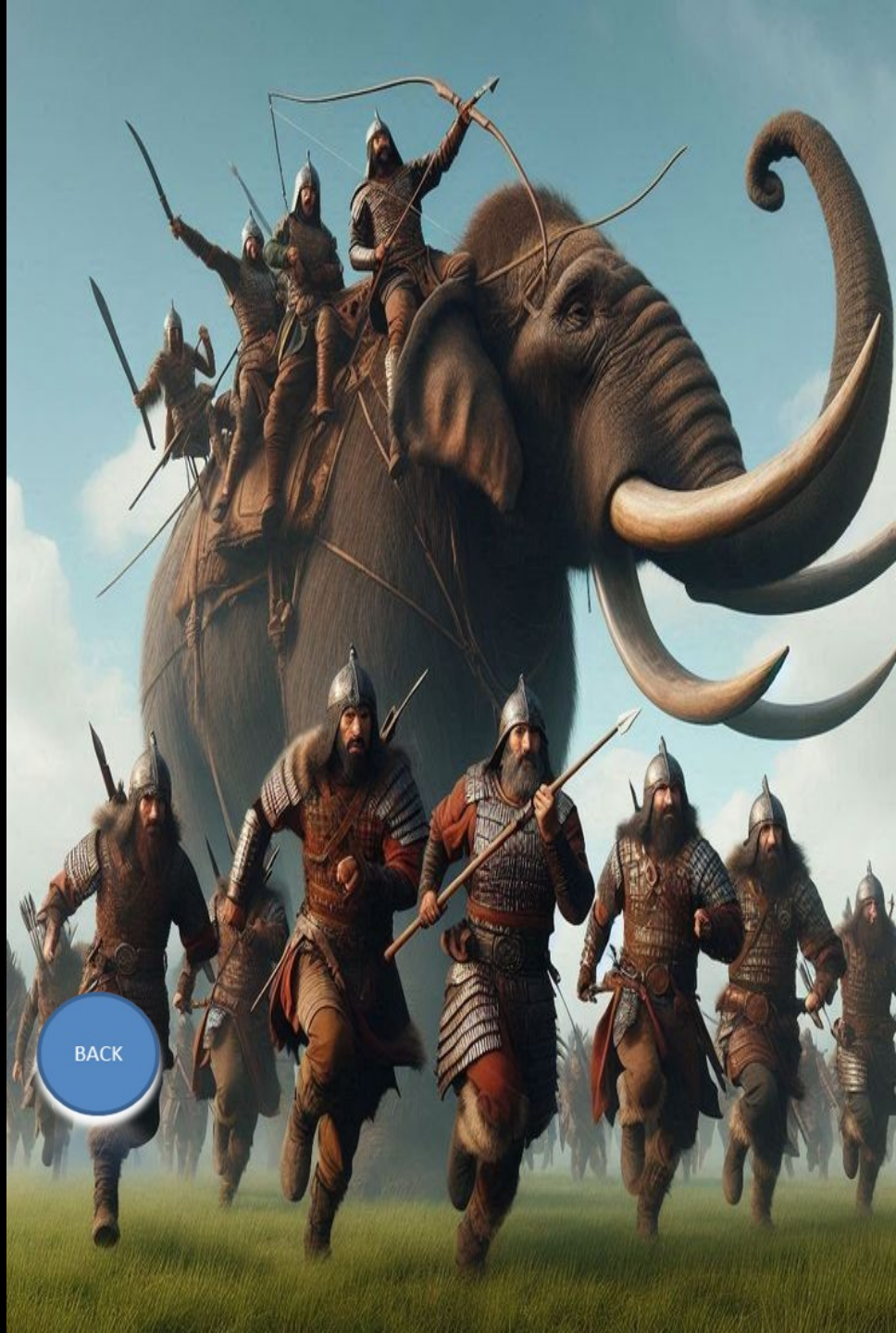
أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَٰبِ ٱلْفِيلِ ﴿١﴾

Have you not seen ﷺ how your Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant?

BACK

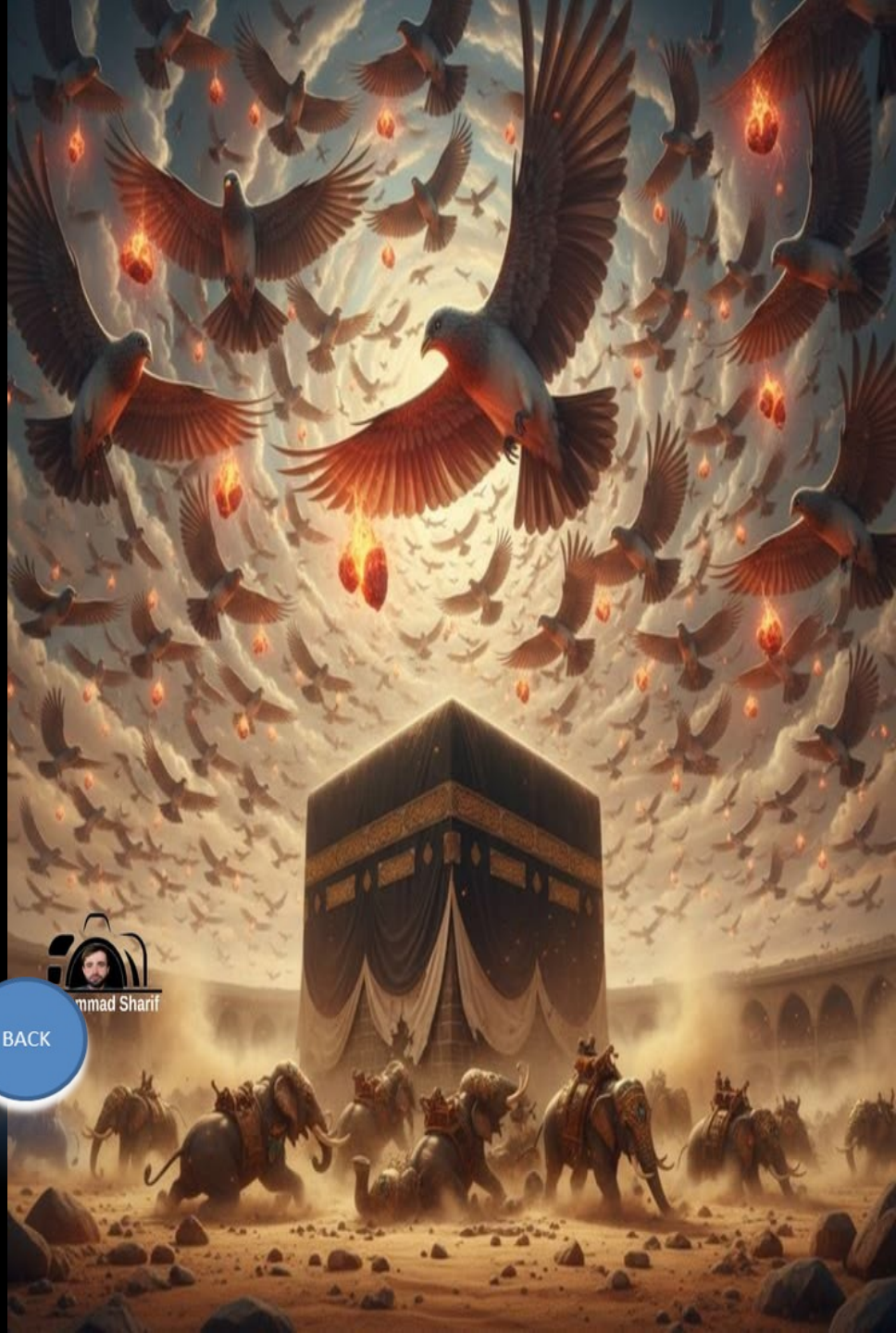
أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَٰبِ ٱلْفِيلِ ﴿١﴾ أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ
كَيْدَهُمْ فِى تَضْلِيلٍ ﴿٢﴾ وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ ﴿٣﴾

Did He not frustrate their scheme?



وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ ﴿٣﴾

For He sent against them flocks of birds,



BACK

تَرْمِيهِم بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ٤

that pelted them with stones of baked clay,

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ ٥

leaving them like chewed up straw.1

Footnote - 1

Or worm-eaten leaves.

EXCERCISES
BACK

1. Remembering (Recall)

1) How many verses are there in Surah Al-Fīl?
2) Which army is mentioned in this surah?
3) Who was the leader of the army of the elephant?
4) What birds did Allah send against the army?
5) What did the birds throw at the army?
6) What happened to the army after they were struck?
7) Which sacred place was Allah protecting?

2. Understanding (Comprehension)

1) Why did Allah destroy the army of the elephant?
2) Explain the meaning of "stones of baked clay.“
3) Why were birds chosen as the means of Allah's punishment?
4) What does the comparison "like eaten straw" teach us?
5) Summarize the story of Surah Al-Fīl in your own words.
6) What lesson does this surah teach about Allah's power?

3. Applying

1) If someone thinks they can succeed by using only their power, what lesson from Surah Al-Fīl would you share?
2) How can this surah increase your trust in Allah during difficult times?
3) How should a Muslim react when seeing people who seem very powerful but act unjustly?
4) Think of a situation where Allah's help is greater than human strength. How does Surah Al-Fīl relate to it?
5) How can the message of this surah encourage believers who feel weak?

4. Analyzing

1) Compare the strength of Abraha's army with the birds Allah sent. What does this contrast teach us?
2) Why does the surah mention the elephants before describing the birds?
3) Analyze how each verse builds the story step by step.
4) Why did Allah make the destruction of the army a memorable event?
5) What can we infer about Allah's protection of the Ka'bah from this surah?
6) How does Surah Al-Fīl show that appearances can be deceiving?

5. Evaluating

1) Why do you think this event remained important enough to be mentioned in the Qur'an?
2) Which lesson from Surah Al-Fīl is most relevant today? Explain your answer.
3) Do you think material strength always leads to success? Support your answer using the surah.
4) Why is arrogance dangerous according to the message of this surah?
5) How does this surah strengthen a believer's confidence in Allah?

6. Creating (Higher-Order Thinking)

1) Give the surah another suitable title and explain your choice.
2) Write a short paragraph describing the events from the viewpoint of someone in Makkah.
3) Create a timeline showing the main events of Surah Al-Fīl.
4) Design a poster illustrating the main lesson of the surah using symbols (without drawing prophets or sacred figures).
5) Write three practical life lessons that students can apply after studying this surah.
6) Compose a short speech explaining why Muslims should remember the story of the People of the Elephant.

Higher-Order Thinking Questions (HOTS)

1) Why did Allah protect the Ka'bah before it became the center of Islam?
2) What would have happened if Abraha had succeeded in destroying the Ka'bah? Why is this important?
3) How does this surah prove that victory comes from Allah rather than from numbers or weapons?
4) Why did Allah use creatures as small as birds to defeat a mighty army?
5) What connection can you find between Surah Al-Fīl and the following surah, Surah Quraysh?
6) What qualities should Muslims develop after reflecting on the message of Surah Al-Fīl?

و الحمد لله رب العالمين